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United Nations Forum on Forests
Open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group established pursuant to paragraph 48 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33
First meeting
New York, 25-27 April 2016

Report of the Open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group established pursuant to paragraph 48 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33 on the work of its first meeting

Summary

By its resolution 2015/33, the Economic and Social Council established a working group and an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group under the United Nations Forum on Forests. In accordance with paragraph 48 of the resolution, the expert group was to conduct up to two meetings in 2016, to develop and submit proposals to the working group on the matters referred to in paragraph 44 of the resolution, namely: (a) the replacement of the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in paragraph 1 (b) of the United Nations forest instrument with an appropriate reference to the Sustainable Development Goals and targets; and (b) the strategic plan for the period 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020, consistent with section XI of the resolution. The first meeting of the expert group was held in New York from 25 to 27 April 2016. Subject to availability of funding, a second meeting will be organized.

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I. Background

1. By paragraphs 46 and 48 of its resolution 2015/33, the Economic and Social Council established a working group and an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group under the United Nations Forum on Forests. The expert group was tasked, in paragraph 48 of the resolution, to conduct up to two meetings in 2016, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, to develop and submit to the working group proposals on the matters referred to in paragraph 44 of the resolution (see para. 10 below).

II. Organizational and other matters

A. Venue and duration of the meeting

2. The first meeting of the expert group was held in New York from 25 to 27 April 2016.

B. Opening of the meeting and election of the Co-Chairs

3. The meeting was opened by the Chair of the Bureau of the twelfth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, Peter Besseau (Canada).

4. Gholamhossein Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran) and Hans Hoogeveen (Netherlands) were elected as Co-Chairs by acclamation.

5. The Co-Chairs, in their opening remarks, highlighted the need to develop the strategic plan guiding the international arrangement on forests and its components to promote coherence and synergies on all matters relating to forests across sectors and partners. They stressed the need to integrate the forest-related Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets and other relevant international commitments, including provisions in the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, along with the national actions and international cooperation measures contained in the United Nations forest instrument,[1] to develop a holistic approach to the plan.

6. In his opening statement, the Director of the Forum secretariat updated the experts on major developments in international policy, including the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. He provided an overview of key actions taken by the General Assembly pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, including the strengthening of the Forum secretariat. He drew attention to activities carried out by the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, including continuing collaboration with the Global Environment Facility secretariat and the Green Climate Fund. Lastly, he provided an update on activities to celebrate the International Day of Forests in 2016.

7. The Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, in his opening statement, stressed the unique challenge and opportunity to unlock forests' full potential in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and recalled that the renewed international arrangement on forests provided an excellent framework in that regard. He drew attention to the continuing work under the Partnership in

[1] Formerly known as the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. Its name was changed by the General Assembly in resolution 70/199.

responding to the invitations addressed to it by the Forum at its eleventh session. He assured the experts of the Partnership's commitment to supporting the work of the expert group and implementing the strategic plan. He described efforts by members to develop a comprehensive proposal for making the Partnership more efficient, more responsive to the invitations addressed to it and more effective in delivering on its functions and tasks.

C. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

8. The expert group adopted its agenda (E/CN.18/2016/AHEG/1) and programme of work. It was noted that there would be no negotiated outcome and that the Co-Chairs would prepare a summary of the discussions.

9. The representative of the secretariat of the Forum introduced the relevant documents.

D. Tasks of the expert group

10. In carrying out its tasks, the expert group was guided by Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, by which it had been mandated to develop and submit proposals to the working group of the Forum on the matters referred to in paragraph 44 of the resolution, namely: (a) the replacement of the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in paragraph 1 (b) of the United Nations forest instrument with an appropriate reference to the Sustainable Development Goals and targets; and (b) the strategic plan for the period 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020, consistent with section XI of the resolution. In developing proposals for the strategic plan, the expert group was expected to take into account the views of and proposals submitted by Member States and relevant stakeholders, as well as the relevant paragraphs of the resolution and the outcomes of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda and the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

11. The authors of the background paper on elements for the preparation of the strategic plan, Stephanie Caswell and Ivan Tomaselli, provided an overview of the paper.

12. Toshimasa Masuyama (Japan) presented a summary of the discussions of the expert panel on the strategic plan, organized by the Forestry Agency of Japan, in collaboration with the Forum secretariat, in Tokyo from 7 to 11 March 2016.

13. A discussion ensued, during which the authors of the background paper responded to questions and comments from experts.

E. Attendance and participation

14. The meeting was attended by 101 government-designated experts from 56 countries, 25 other experts designated by member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, other international and regional organizations, regional processes and major groups, and independent experts. A full list of participants will be made available on the Forum website.

III. Outcome and closing of the first meeting of the expert group

15. At the closing plenary session, the expert group adopted the report of the meeting and took note of the summary by the Co-Chairs, which is set out in the annex to the present report.

Annex

Summary by the Co-Chairs

I. Introduction

1. Experts expressed appreciation to the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the organization of the meeting, to the consultants for their preparation of and presentation on the background paper on the preparation of elements for the strategic plan 2017-2030 and to the Government of Japan for hosting an expert panel on the plan from 7 to 11 March in Tokyo and for presenting the moderator's summary of the panel's discussions.

2. It was stressed that the present Co-Chairs' summary was not a negotiated text and that the views and conclusions presented did not necessarily reflect the views of all participants.

II. General points

3. Experts recognized that the Economic and Social Council had, in its resolution 2015/33, set out the purpose of the strategic plan of the international arrangement on forests for the period 2017-2030 and provided guidance on its content, which would need to be reflected in the development of the plan.

4. Experts also recognized that the strategic plan presented an unprecedented opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of all types of forests and trees outside forests to sustainable development, in addition to the role, profile and added value of the international arrangement on forests in that regard. They said that the plan should also build on the momentum of and capitalize on the opportunities presented by the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular regarding the contribution of forests to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

5. There was a general view that the strategic plan should be concise, strategic in nature, ambitious, focused on priorities, effective and efficient, addressing and aligned with the five objectives of the international arrangement on forests, taking into account the convening and catalytic roles of the Forum as a global policy body on all types of forests. Some experts recalled that the existing agreements of the Forum, together with the future strategic plan and quadrennial programmes of work, were voluntary and not legally binding.

6. There was a general view that the strategic plan had an important role in improving coherence, enhancing synergies and reducing the fragmentation of forest-related issues at the global level, as well as in addressing the means of implementation. It was proposed that the plan should provide guidance at the global and national levels and foster the full engagement of key stakeholders and other partners, including the private sector, in its implementation. Some experts indicated that the plan should strengthen the implementation of sustainable forest management at the global, regional and local levels.

7. Given the strategic plan's 13-year time frame, experts recognized that its guidance would need to be relatively general, with the quadrennial programmes of work serving as the vehicle for making the plan operational through the identification of priority actions and resource needs for successive four-year periods.

8. It was noted that the establishment of annual sessions of the Forum, with an alternating focus on implementation and technical advice and policy discussions, offered an excellent framework for efficient and result-oriented international dialogue and actions based on the strategic plan, as well as for focused contributions to the global follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

9. It was suggested that the strategic plan should enhance the visibility of the Forum to a wide range of stakeholders inside and outside the Forum, including through interaction with key regional, subregional and stakeholder partners. Experts recognized the role of partners in raising awareness of the plan.

10. On the replacement of the reference to the Millennium Development Goals with an appropriate reference to the Sustainable Development Goals, a view was expressed in support of replacing such reference in the preamble and paragraph 1 of the United Nations forest instrument. The expert noted that the timeline of the global objectives on forests had been extended by the General Assembly from 2015 to 2030, stressing that it would be inopportune to make any other substantive changes to the instrument.

III. Title

11. There was a general view that the strategic plan should be entitled "United Nations strategic plan on forests: 2017-2030" to signpost its connection with the United Nations and as a step towards global coherence. There were other suggestions to make reference to the international arrangement on forests or the global objectives on forests.

IV. Mission and vision

12. Many experts stressed that the mission and vision statements should be clear and concise messaging statements that would communicate the overall purpose of the international arrangement on forests to a wide range of stakeholders and partners and the general public. Some indicated that the vision would define the mission and therefore should be defined first. A suggestion was made for the exact language and formulation of the statements to be explored by appropriate experts.

13. The following mission statement proposals were made:

(a) For the benefit of present and future generations:

(i) To promote policy dialogue and encourage intersectoral and inter-agency collaboration for the achievement of the sustainable management of all types of forests;[a]

[a] Some experts expressed their preference for a focus on the implementation of sustainable forest management to realize the multiple benefits of all types of forests.

(ii) To contribute to the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals;

(iii) To halt deforestation, in cooperation with relevant sectors, and prevent forest degradation, and strengthen long-term political commitment towards those objectives;

(b) To enhance cooperation, coordination and political commitment at all levels to promote the implementation of sustainable forest management and enhance the contribution of forests to sustainable development and the well-being of future generations.

14. The following vision statement proposals were made:

(a) A world in which forests are sustainably managed, contribute to sustainable development and benefit all;

(b) The world's forests are protected and sustainably managed, providing economic, social and environmental benefits for all;

(c) Forests are protected, sustainably used and restored and their services are recognized and valued by all;

(d) The rights of indigenous peoples and forest dwellers are respected;

(e) To enhance the positioning of the international arrangement on forests in the global context and to reinforce the forest sector at the national level.

V. Communication strategy

15. Pursuant to paragraph 39 of resolution 2015/33, the strategic plan should outline a communication strategy to raise awareness of the work of the international arrangement on forests. A number of experts proposed that that strategy could be considered following the adoption of the plan, in order for it to be aligned with the goals or objectives and targets set out therein.

16. There was a general view that the strategic plan could also serve as an important communication and public relations tool. Some experts viewed it as part of a broader communication strategy to raise awareness of the importance of forests and sustainable forest management to human well-being and livelihoods, the role of the United Nations forest instrument and the work of the international arrangement on forests and its components.

17. To that end, experts considered that the strategic plan should be a concise (perhaps no more than 15 pages) and stand-alone document that used simple, direct and user-friendly language. One suggested that the communication strategy should include a brief analysis of existing international commitments on forests and a brief description of the activities of forest-related international and regional organizations and processes in support of the international arrangement on forests.

VI. Goals and targets

18. Some experts recognized that identifying goals and targets was at the centre of the strategic plan. Others said that they preferred a plan that would be less focused

on goals and targets and more based on strategic approaches and guidelines. Some called for a definition of goals, targets and objectives. Others preferred to have wording other than "goals and targets". It was stressed that the Forum was the primary intergovernmental body on forests.

19. Some experts emphasized that the goals and targets should flow from the vision and mission statements, while others considered it possible to discuss goals and targets and the global objectives on forests without first articulating the vision and mission.

20. A range of views were expressed about the nature of the goals and targets, including the following proposals and options:

(a) The strategic plan should follow the six-goal approach set out in the illustrative matrix drawn up by the expert panel in Tokyo in March 2016,[b] which had been based on the four global objectives on forests plus two cross-cutting goals aligned with the five objectives of the international arrangement on forests;

(b) Instead of defining goals and targets, the strategic plan should be based on a few strategic headlines with compelling descriptions, incorporating the various globally accepted forest-related commitments;

(c) The strategic plan should not develop new targets and should focus on the global objectives on forests, extended to 2030;

(d) The strategic plan should not rely only on adapting existing targets. New targets were needed for cross-cutting goals 5 and 6 in the illustrative matrix regarding, for example, strengthening the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and the involvement of partners in the international arrangement on forests;

(e) The strategic plan should reflect a coherent approach based on integrating existing forest-related objectives, targets, actions and other commitments;

(f) The strategic plan should contain specific priority time-bound deliverables for the components and partners of the international arrangement on forests;

(g) The strategic plan should include a mechanism to address new and emerging issues, such as the impact of dust storms on forests;

(h) The strategic plan should include a goal and associated targets on building coherence and improving coordination among forest-related processes and initiatives at the global level, including through the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests;

(i) Identifying two columns of targets, as in the illustrative matrix, would make a useful distinction between what might be a set of targets for the strategic plan and other linked targets and commitments;

(j) The strategic plan should distinguish between targets adopted by other intergovernmental bodies and targets set by the Forum for the international arrangement on forests. The added value of the plan with regard to existing targets should be clarified;

[b] See www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Moderator-Summary-IAF.pdf.

(k) The strategic plan should include a focus on key cross-cutting issues, whether those contained in the 2030 Agenda or such as poverty eradication; human rights, climate change, governance/forest law enforcement, governance and trade, the participation of relevant stakeholders, especially indigenous peoples and local communities; gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and means of implementation and the science-policy interface;

(l) Goals and targets contained in the strategic plan could be taken up by regional and subregional processes, countries and major groups and other stakeholders on a voluntary basis;

(m) A target on disaster risk reduction could be included under goal 2 or the second global objective on forests;

(n) Goals and targets could also be expressed as deliverables;

(o) Every goal or target in the strategic plan should have a clear indication of the resources and means of implementation needed for its achievement;

(p) If a new goal or target were added, specific new and additional resources for its achievement would have to be associated therewith.

21. Some experts suggested additional targets on creating enabling environments for private sector investment and engagement, and facilitating the engagement of major groups at the global and national levels.

VII. Quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020

22. Experts recalled that, consistent with paragraph 40 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, the Forum would make the strategic plan operational through quadrennial programmes of work setting out priority actions and resource needs, beginning with the period 2017-2020.

23. There was a general view that the quadrennial programmes of work should also identify key actors and contributors. Some experts called for the inclusion of relevant actions and resource needs at the global and regional levels. Views were expressed on the content of the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020 and the quadrennial programmes of work more generally, including the following:

(a) The quadrennial programmes of work should include actions:

(i) To strengthen work with partners;

(ii) To enable the clearing-house role of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network;

(iii) To clarify the Forum's input to the Sustainable Development Goals process and build coherence and links with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement;

(iv) To improve the transparency of operations by the Forum secretariat;

(v) To address the science-policy interface, including science-policy dialogue;

(b) The quadrennial programmes of work should include cross-cutting issues from the 2030 Agenda;

(c) The quadrennial programmes of work should reflect linkages between odd-year and even-year sessions of the Forum and address how the Forum would work intersessionally;

(d) The quadrennial programme of work for 2017-2020 should include a proposal from the Forum secretariat on a cycle and format for national reporting on the United Nations forest instrument, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33. It should be developed in consultation with members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other organizations active in efforts to streamline and harmonize reporting;

(e) The quadrennial programme of work for 2017-2020 should complete the transformation to a strengthened international arrangement on forests, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, and identify themes of Forum sessions, low-cost and high-priority actions, resource needs and responsible parties;

(f) The quadrennial programmes of work should include an agenda item on the contributions of the Forum to the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, taking into account the alternating implementation/policy cycle of Forum sessions and the eventual modalities of the global reviews at the high-level political forum;

(g) The quadrennial programmes of work should line up with the thematic follow-up of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, making it important to follow the policy cycles of the Economic and Social Council and to align themes discussed in terms of the Goals follow-up with themes discussed by the Forum;

(h) The quadrennial programmes of work should be action oriented, recognize regional differences and needs and address partnerships, means of implementation and capacity-building;

(i) The quadrennial programmes of work should include actions to improve communication and public relations with external audiences, including on how forests improve socioeconomic conditions;

(j) The quadrennial programmes of work should seek synergies with other medium-term work programmes and initiatives of other international forest-related organizations;

(k) The quadrennial programme of work for 2017-2020 should include actions for targets relating to the Sustainable Development Goals with a 2020 target date, in addition to actions relating to forest law enforcement, governance and trade, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and mobilizing resources, including domestic resources and private financing for sustainable forest management;

(l) The quadrennial programmes of work should include actions to address the specific needs of low-forest-cover countries, small island developing States and least developed countries;

(m) The quadrennial programmes of work should focus on activities, not include routine actions and include verifiable indicators for activities;

(n) The quadrennial programmes of work should feature the cross-cutting issues of the 2030 Agenda also as cross-cutting issues, including participation, partnerships, poverty eradication, gender and the empowerment of women and girls;

(o) The quadrennial programmes of work should enhance intersectoral and inter-agency collaboration to address interlinkages between forests and biodiversity, food security, water, energy and climate.

VIII. Actions

24. Experts expressed views on whether actions should be included in the strategic plan and in the quadrennial programme of work. Some favoured having the plan focus on goals and targets. Others said that the plan should also specify a limited number of long-term or continuing priority actions or action areas that would be transformative in nature and could be taken forward in the programme of work in the form of specific activities over the four-year period.

25. Suggestions for continuing priority actions for the strategic plan included climate change actions, enabling environments for private sector investment, including by smallholders and communities, and the engagement of stakeholders at the global and national levels.

26. Other views included the following:

(a) Priority actions should be defined for the global, regional and national levels;

(b) It would be important to understand to whom the actions were directed. Actions at the global level for the Forum itself should be included;

(c) Means of implementation actions would have to be included in the strategic plan and quadrennial programmes of work;

(d) It might be useful to split the illustrative matrix into elements for the strategic plan and elements for the quadrennial programme of work;

(e) The strategic plan should invite low-forest-cover countries to develop regional strategic plans for the period 2017-2030. The financial requirements for each priority action defined in the quadrennial programmes of work should be clearly presented in the quadrennial programmes;

(f) Actions were needed to facilitate assessments of progress in the implementation of the strategic plan.

IX. Framework for reviewing implementation

27. Consistent with paragraphs 6 (f), 16 and 34 to 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, experts recognized that there were aspects relevant to reviewing the implementation of sustainable forest management, including progress in the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument and a review of the Forum's resolutions and decisions since 2015, the strategic plan itself and the Forum's contribution to the review and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda, in particular, the forest-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

A. Voluntary national reporting on the United Nations forest instrument

28. Several experts stressed the importance of enhancing monitoring and assessment of the progress in the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument. They highlighted a need to reduce reporting burdens by streamlining, harmonizing and synchronizing with the existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms and formats, in particular through the continuing efforts in that area by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other criteria and indicators processes.

29. Experts noted that reporting on the forest instrument should be an integral part of the strategic plan. Several deliverables could be formulated around the issue of coherence. For example, the instrument could be used as a framework for enhancing national forest policies.

30. The cycle for voluntary national reporting should take into account the cycle and scope of other forest-related monitoring and reporting and review processes and mechanisms, in particular the Global Forest Resources Assessment of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Sustainable Development Goals review cycle by the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Economic and Social Council cycle.

31. Some experts noted that national reporting on the forest instrument would remain voluntary and subject to the provision of external financial resources and assistance. One gave an example of the assistance provided to countries to prepare national reports under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

32. One suggestion to strengthen implementation and reporting on the forest instrument was to use a model of voluntary reporting similar to the intended nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement. Through such a model, Member States could report on their implementation of the instrument on the basis of the goals and targets described in the strategic plan, activities and results.

33. Experts highlighted a need to make better use of national reports for wider purposes, including through the presentation of the reports at the odd-year sessions of the Forum; enhanced cooperation with regional and subregional organizations and major groups and other stakeholders; and identifying follow-up actions needed in Forum resolutions. The link between reporting and communication, as illustrated through the FAO global forest resource assessments, was noted.

34. One expert proposed that the Forum secretariat should prepare an inventory of existing forest-related reporting processes at the global level, in order to identify the best areas in which streamlining could occur.

35. A need to involve major groups in the preparation of voluntary national reports was also expressed by some experts. An external review of national progress, subject to the request of the Member State concerned, was suggested.

B. Assessing the implementation of the Forum's resolutions and decisions, and the strategic plan

36. Experts considered that periodic reviews of progress in implementing the Forum's resolutions and decisions could be undertaken during odd-year sessions of

the Forum, at appropriate intervals. The initial review could be based on an inventory beginning with 2015 as a baseline year.

37. It was noted that that task was unique to the Forum and could not be based solely on the existing information, such as the FAO global forest resource assessments.

38. It was also noted that evaluating and/or assessing progress towards the achievement of the goals and targets contained in the strategic plan would be an important activity.

39. A number of experts said that a set of global indicators would be needed to evaluate progress against the goals and targets set out in the strategic plan. Those indicators could be built on relevant Sustainable Development Goals indicators and other relevant indicators, for example from criteria and indicators processes. If agreed upon, indicators could be included in the strategic plan; otherwise their formulation could be an action in the quadrennial programme of work for 2017-2020.

X. Contribution to the follow-up, review and implementation of the forest-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda under the high-level political forum

40. Experts recognized that the Forum's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals review process would become an important part of the Forum's work. As a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council, the Forum and its secretariat would have a significant role in contributing to the global reviews of the 2030 Agenda in its entirety, in particular the Goals, global partnership and means of implementation, and other cross-cutting issues.

41. Experts took note that the Sustainable Development Goals review process was under discussion and agreed that the Forum would be better placed to consider the specific nature of its contribution to the high-level political forum once the process had been agreed upon, highlighting a need for Member States to coordinate with their own delegates in that process. The view was also expressed that the Forum should provide added value in reporting on the progress made by countries and other stakeholders to the global reviews of the Goals to be conducted by the high-level political forum. A need to fully integrate the social, economic and environmental contributions of forests to sustainable development was noted, as was a need to provide a space for regional organizations to contribute to the reviews.

XI. Priorities for the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network

42. Experts recognized that, consistent with paragraph 13 (b) of Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, the strategic plan should set clear priorities for the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. Experts emphasized that those priorities should include the relevant paragraphs of the resolution, including paragraph 13. Views were expressed on additional priorities for the Network.

43. A suggestion was made to focus the work of the Network on capacity-building for national forest financing strategies. Several experts indicated that assisting countries to have access to resources and capacity-building should be among the

Network's priorities. Others indicated that it was important for the Network to assist countries with special needs and circumstances to mobilize resources effectively, including through close collaboration with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. Some highlighted a need to enhance synergy and coherence among the various provisions of the 2030 Agenda, the Rio Conventions and other relevant processes on means of implementation, in order to offer coherent support to countries.

44. A suggestion was made to organize an organization-led or country-led initiative to discuss major challenges and opportunities relating to countries' access to major sources of funding for sustainable forest management.

45. It was also proposed that the priorities of the Network should include assisting Member States in designing forest projects and applying for funding for them from existing and emerging financial sources; assisting Member States to develop national forest financing strategies; enhancing Member States' capacity to raise and use funding; and collecting and sharing forest financing information, including through the establishment of a database. On the last-mentioned proposal, some experts suggested modifications to strengthen the role of the Network to enhance the capacity of countries to raise funding for forests.

46. Some experts suggested that the Network should coordinate with regional organizations in convening capacity-building seminars or training activities on forest financing issues.

47. An expert noted that small and medium-sized forest and farm producers and organizations were among the largest segment of the private sector in forestry and could benefit from capacity-building and financing for investments.

48. It was suggested that the strategic plan should outline indicators to measure the progress in increasing the access of countries to financial resources under the Network, in providing assistance to developing countries to gain access to financing, building on capacity-building projects carried out in Africa, least developed countries and small island developing States in the past, and in forest financing projects currently carried out through the Network.

XII. Resource needs

49. It was noted that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) would play an important role in the area of resource needs through its strategy for sustainable forest management. The expert from the GEF secretariat reported that States had made excellent use of the resources available through the strategy under the sixth replenishment, covering the period 2014-2018, and that quadrennial programme of work cycles were ideally aligned with the seventh replenishment. Countries were encouraged to take advantage of that opportunity.

50. A number of experts stressed that means of implementation would be essential to make progress in the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument and related reporting and the strategic plan.

51. A suggestion was made to organize a high-level meeting among donor countries to support the implementation of the strategic plan once it had been agreed upon.

XIII. Roles

52. Some experts stressed that the strategic plan should provide a clear and precise description of the institutional set-up of the international arrangement on forests and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Forum, its member States, the Forum secretariat, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, regional and subregional organizations and major groups and other stakeholders in the implementation of the plan.

A. United Nations Forum on Forests

53. Experts noted the central role of Forum in developing the strategic plan and highlighted that it should remain the entity with overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the plan and reviewing it as appropriate.

54. It was noted that the strategic plan should guide how the annual sessions of the Forum, with their alternating focus on "science and review" and "policy development", would be used to implement the plan.

B. States members of the Forum

55. Experts noted that the States members of the Forum had the responsibility for the implementation of sustainable forest management in their national territory and would continue to report on a voluntary basis on the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument and of the strategic plan, taking into account the availability of resources. In addition, implementation and reporting by countries should be strengthened and resources provided to countries to that end.

C. Forum secretariat

56. It was suggested that the strategic plan should describe how the Forum secretariat would prioritize its activities in order to carry out its work, within existing resources.

57. A suggestion was made that the Bureau and secretariat of the Forum should explore innovative and creative modalities and tools to engage with Member States during intersessional periods.

58. Some experts noted that the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work should emphasize transparent, efficient and accountable operations by the Forum secretariat.

D. Collaborative Partnership on Forests

59. It was the general view that the Collaborative Partnership on Forests would continue to provide technical and scientific advice and support coherent approaches to forest-related issues. Experts stressed that there was a need to accord priority to its work. With a strengthened role and modus operandi of the Partnership within the international arrangement on forests, some experts recommended that the Partnership

should develop multi-year joint workplans, with a clear timeline, role, division of labour among Partnership members and ways to engage with major groups on a case-by-case basis, in line with the strategic plan and the guidance provided by the Forum. Some experts also suggested that the plan should describe the way in which individual Partnership members could support specific areas of the plan.

E. Regional and subregional organizations

60. Some experts noted a need to clearly identify in the strategic plan the role of existing regional organizations and processes, including the FAO regional forestry commissions, in the implementation of the plan, in addition to the manner in which the regional organizations and processes would feed into the global discussion.

61. Several experts suggested that the strategic plan should, among other things, encourage:

(a) Involving the other relevant forest policy-setting members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests when it concerned forests, such as FAO, the International Tropical Timber Organization and the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, so as to have a joint approach and implementation process;

(b) Making use, as much as possible, of existing regional organizations and processes, with the involvement of the relevant stakeholders and major groups in each region.

F. Major groups and other stakeholders

62. Some experts noted the importance of the participation of major groups in the work of the international arrangement on forests in order to strengthen the arrangement's visibility, credibility and impact on the ground. They stressed a need to develop simpler and reliable arrangements and clear incentives to further engage with major groups and other stakeholders at the global, regional and national levels. They recommended that the Forum secretariat should develop a modus operandi on how to facilitate stakeholder engagement.

63. Some experts also highlighted the role of the private sector, including small and medium-sized forest and farm producers and their organizations, in achieving sustainable forest management and a need to promote synergies with the private sector in combating deforestation relating to the supply chain of commodities both inside and outside the forest sector.

64. Some experts noted that creative ways for stakeholder engagement in the work of the Forum within the United Nations rules and procedures would need to be explored in the context of the odd-year and even-year sessions of the Forum, including in the preparation of input to the high-level political forum, taking into account recent developments in other processes with regard to engaging with stakeholders, such as the Lima-Paris Action Agenda.

XIV. Table of contents of the strategic plan

65. In considering the table of contents for the strategic plan, experts generally agreed on the following six headings:

(a) Vision and mission;

(b) Introduction;[c]

(c) Strategic approach (aligned with the objectives of the international arrangement on forests): global objectives on forests, Sustainable Development Goals/targets, etc.;

(d) Implementation framework;

(e) Review framework;

(f) Annexes, as needed.

A. Introduction

66. It was proposed that the strategic plan should highlight the importance of forests to human well-being and the 2030 Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals on poverty eradication, water, desertification and many others, together with challenges and opportunities relating to sustainable forest management.

67. Some experts highlighted that the introduction and the entire strategic plan should not contain or mention initiatives, data or key messages not accepted by all Member States.

B. Strategic approach

68. Experts proposed that the strategic approach should:

(a) Identify strong strategic headlines based on the global objectives on forests and the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, setting out the proposed achievements for each headline;

(b) Take into account the relevant aspects of the Paris Agreement regarding mitigation of and adaptation to climate change;

(c) Distinguish between thematic and operational goals;

(d) Address cross-cutting issues, including scientific and technical cooperation;

(e) Address natural/native forests and plantations;

(f) Address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, governance, forest landscape restoration and rehabilitation.

69. It was noted that the implementation and review frameworks were also part of the strategic approach.

[c] Some experts proposed that headings (a) and (b) could be reversed to improve the flow from the vision and mission to the strategic approach.

C. Implementation framework

70. Many experts emphasized that the means of implementation, especially financial resources and capacity-building, including capacity-building at the regional and subregional levels, were a key component of the implementation framework and should be clearly highlighted, including, for example, through a separate chapter under the framework. Increasing the visibility of forests in national accounting was proposed.

71. It was pointed out that the implementation and review frameworks were closely interlinked in the context of the Forum, which had various tasks relating to monitoring and reporting as important aspects of its role in implementing the strategic plan and advancing its goals and targets. It was suggested that the results of reviews and assessments should influence the implementation framework.

72. Experts proposed that the implementation framework should:

(a) Set out the overarching principle for implementing the strategic plan, including with regard to human rights, global partnership, the empowerment of women and girls and poverty eradication;

(b) Include cross-cutting issues contained in the 2030 Agenda to improve coherence and consistency between the international arrangement on forests and the Agenda, as well as with multilateral forest-related agreements;

(c) Provide guidance on the role of regional and subregional partners;[d]

(d) Provide guidance on the role and contribution of major groups and other stakeholders, including the scientific and technical community;

(e) Take into account tenure issues, issues relating to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, deforestation-free supply chains, public welfare services and partnerships;

(f) Include voluntary commitments by Member States.

D. Review framework

73. It was suggested that the heading could also read "implementation review framework" and that the section could provide guidance on the midterm review of the strategic plan.

E. Annexes

74. Proposals were made to include the following information in annexes:

(a) The targets and any actions that might be defined for the strategic plan to allow for flexibility to adjust them as needed over the 13-year time frame;

(b) The Sustainable Development Goals, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and other relevant commitments;

[d] It was suggested to reach out to the range of organizations, including the regional commissions, regional development banks and FAO and its regional forestry commissions.

(c) The role of international, regional and subregional forest-related organizations;

(d) The quadrennial programme of work;

(e) An outline of how the Forum planned to implement activities;

(f) The organizational structure of the international arrangement on forests and its components and partners.

F. Preamble or preface

75. It was suggested that a preamble or preface could be developed as a lead-in to the strategic plan, which could take the form, for example, of a message from the Secretary-General and a foreword from the Director of the Forum secretariat.

G. Alternative structure of the strategic plan

76. One expert proposed a restructuring of the strategic plan, for example for publication, to heighten its impact as a communication tool. He proposed the following alternative structure: (a) introduction; (b) vision, mission and strategic directions or thematic priorities; (c) key roles of forests for sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda; (d) maximizing the potential of key actors and partners for the international arrangement on forests; (e) strengthening the international arrangement on forests and the Forum; and (f) vision of success for the international arrangement on forests and the Forum. The strategic approach could be included as an annex.

XV. Follow-up activities

77. On the follow-up activities after the meeting, the Co-Chairs stressed that the discussions had provided them with valuable contributions that would enable the process to take a major step forward.

78. The Co-Chairs informed the experts of their planned activities before the second meeting. They emphasized that they planned to have the constant and full involvement of all countries and stakeholders at all stages of the process, given that that was the only way that the group could successfully accomplish its mandate. In that process, the Co-Chairs could also consult the Bureau of the Forum at its twelfth session.

79. The Co-Chairs said that they would, on the basis of the input provided through the meeting and the outcome of the expert panel held in Tokyo and the consultants' paper, provide their initial proposed options and building blocks on the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work. Views and input from Member States and stakeholders would be solicited. According to the feedback received, the Co-Chairs would provide a revised proposal in advance of the second meeting. The exact dates of those activities would be subject to confirmation of the dates for the second meeting. The timelines of the activities would be officially communicated in due course.

80. Experts from Finland, the Netherlands and Switzerland announced the intention of their Governments to contribute funds for the organization and convening of the second meeting, with the broad participation of countries. In that respect, the importance of provision of interpretation services during the second meeting was emphasized. The expert from China indicated that his Government made a regular contribution to the Forum Trust Fund and would be in contact with the Forum secretariat on the matter.